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Transformation in the South African Military: A Study of the Gender-Representivity Component in the South African Navy

ANNETTE SEEGER* AND SIMON TAYLOR

ABSTRACT *In 1994 the newly elected ANC government embarked on an ambitious project of transformation, of which gender equality is a critical principle. The South African Navy is required to implement this principle of gender equality as part of its transformation. Our assessment starts with the Navy's policies regarding Gender Transformation, proceeding to an examination of the numbers of women serving in the Navy, their rank distribution, the situation compared to 1999 and the situation compared to men in the Navy. The growth in the number of women and their current number is strikingly good. Yet they may not indicate any success in transforming the SAN because the number of women in temporary positions is high and because temporary employees usually do not leave their mark on an organisation.*

This article¹ asks a set of questions of the transformation policies in the naval sector of the South African military: (1) what are the policies about transformation, including the gender-representivity component? (2) How are these policies implemented in the Department of Defence (DOD) and the South African Navy (SAN)? And (3) what are the results of these policies? The intention is to generate the relevant facts for each of the questions, and to reflect on the thus emerging picture.

For information we draw on various sources, including official documents and statements; figures obtained from the SAN (i.e. SAN Personnel Statistics); and interviews, among others with three Members of Parliament from the Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD). For all interviews conducted, the individuals concerned were informed of the aims of the interviews and permission was granted for their consent for the interviews to be taped and transcribed. Consent was also given for the interviewees to be quoted by name and office. This was done in compliance with University of Cape Town Ethics Committee regulations.

All the interviews were conducted in Parliament between November 2005 and February 2006. Considerable information was obtained from the Department of Defence's human resource database, after official permission was gained.

1. Transformation policy, the military and gender

Transformation as a political concept requires clarification. We focus on transformation as a stated intention and project of the dominant party and transformation as a state policy.

First, the commitment to transformation was born during the anti-apartheid struggle. In their study of the term and debates associated with it, Houston and Muthien (2000) note that transformation is central to all key ANC documents from *Ready to Govern* (policy guidelines adopted at the 1991 National Conference) to *All Power to the People* (a draft of strategy and tactics released before the December 1997 National Conference), as well as many speeches by Presidents Mandela and Mbeki (2000, p. 38). Drawing on these documents, as well as literature from the *Umrabulo* Journals of the African National Congress (ANC), such as *Draft Strategy and Tactics of the African National Congress* (1997) and *The State, Property Relations and Social Transformation: A Discussion Paper towards the Alliance Summit* (1998), it is possible to discern a number of important government reasons for transformation, core principles and agendas.

Transformation was often framed as a pinnacle movement in the overthrow and undoing of a long process of colonialism and Apartheid. Following the first democratic elections in April 1994, the declaration was made that a:

... qualitative element of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) had been accomplished ... We use the words 'element of the NDR' guardedly, precisely because the balance of forces that we referred to earlier dictated that the path to full transfer of power, let alone the strategic objective of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society, would be protracted and tortuous. (ANC, 1997)

Thus, once in power 'the democratic movement took formal control of the state machinery, with the possibility of starting, in earnest, to transform it to serve the new order' (Houston and Muthien, 2000). The goal of the National Democratic Revolution is the creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society.

Some of the later transformation literature addresses the problems the Transformation Project encountered, once the ANC won the 1994 elections. Although the constitution would soon legitimate transformation in and by the state, this was going to be a long and over-drawn process. Constraints included compromises necessitated by negotiations; the inability to force office-holders out of their jobs, even those who 'shared the perspectives of the former government or its white opposition'; and the fact that the state was 'intact' and 'orderly within its own rules' (Houston and Muthien, 2000). A press release issued by the ANC prior to the 1999 National and Provincial elections provides a glimpse of the ANC's views on impeded and slow transformation:

The African National Congress is firmly of the view that, as with all state organs, those independent institutions tasked with the protection of democracy and clean government must be transformed if they are to be able to effectively fulfil their responsibility to society. Without being representative of South African society in their composition, and without mechanisms in place for them themselves to be held accountable to the people, the capacity of these institutions to serve the interests of democracy will be severely limited ... The ANC is ... approaching the 1999 elections with the primary aim of attaining an overwhelming mandate from the people to continue with the process of reconstruction and development in South Africa. In doing so, the ANC will continue to pursue, with all the means at its disposal, the fundamental transformation of all institutions of state. (Motlanthe, 1998)

Second, after 1994 transformation in and by the state was required by the SA Constitution's equality and representivity-clauses (South Africa, 1996). Chapter 2 (the Bill of Rights), section 9, subsection 3 states:

The State may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, *gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status*, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.²

Thus, for potential issues relating to women in any sphere of the state, including the military, no unfair discrimination may arise based on any of the grounds emphasised above. If any claims were to be made to make a distinction between the services of men and women, they would have to be deemed to be 'fair' discriminations. Such a task lies with the courts and their interpretation of the law. Chapter 9 also creates monitoring institutions, for example, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE). The functions of the CGE as laid out by the Constitution are as follows:³

- (1) ... promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality;
- (2) ... has the power, as regulated by national legislation, necessary to perform its functions, including the power to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues concerning gender equality; and
- (3) ... has the additional powers and functions prescribed by national legislation.⁴

Chapter 10 of the SA Constitution relates to Public Administration, and its basic values and principles. One important stipulation, Section 195, sub-section 1(i), is that public administration 'must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation'. Moreover, such a principle applies to 'administration in every sphere of government; organs of state; and public enterprises'; that is, including the security services. Subsection 8 of section 199 determines that multi-party parliamentary committees have oversight of all the security services. These provisions mean that the activities of the Department of Defence (DOD) and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) are highly regulated by the Constitution.⁵ In 1994, the DOD introduced a gender

equity programme. Through this Directorate Equal Opportunities, the DOD was then able to implement a Gender Focal Point programme.

The equality and representivity-clauses of the constitution are the clearest differences between pre- and post-1994 governments. The apartheid state was a racial state and functioned as though human beings were unequal and the state could be run by and for a minority at the top of the racial hierarchy. The state excluded certain races, in the first place, and this exclusion brought illegitimacy. A legitimate state, therefore, required representivity (Houston and Muthien, 2000, p. 37). Although the original sin of exclusion was racial, a legitimate state would think not only in terms of racial categories; now included would be new categories of representivity such as disability and gender. In principle, the categories of representivity are endless. The argument contained in the South African constitution and policies is distinct from other arguments about the inclusion of women into institutions: A different view about increasing the number of women, even to the point of quantitatively over-representing them (as a proportion of the population) is that such increases are a corrective to previous exclusion. This is not fundamentally different to the reasoning often employed in racial affirmative action-policies (see Curry and West, 1996).

A second (different) argument holds that women bring special, indeed unique, perspectives into institutions and therefore deserve to be included. This reasoning is often used to exclude women from the military, the argument being that women's uniqueness in military settings is a negative uniqueness. Women's declared unsuitability to combat is a prime component of this reasoning. Although it has been pointed out that women in military institutions, besides combat situations, tend to have other skills that make them outperform men, for example, in training positions, these skills are not unique. Women just tend to be better at this or that kind of work (Fenner and deYoung, 2001).

Finally, there is the argument that single-gender institutions—male and female—have greater potential for coarse behaviour. If a potential partner is present, however, men and women mind their language, for example, lest they rule themselves out of the running. Mixed-gender institutions thus have better potential for civilised personal behaviour. Critics point out that this civilisation, especially in naval institutions and on ships and submarines, can be measured in the number of pregnancies, suggesting some sailors have become too civilised (Segal, 2006).

We will return to how the South African argument relates to other arguments about women in the military and in the navy. Judging by the numbers only, however, military scholars would say the increasing role of women in South Africa is a reflection more of global than of local trends. Motumi (1998), for example, notes how decreasing birth rates in the developed world; increasing labour force participation rate among women; changing attitudes towards gender roles; and changes in technology have paved the way for more women in the military. Few of these conditions apply only locally. The barriers facing women soldiers in South Africa also have a global ring to them, including a patriarchal society; stereotyping; inappropriate training; and 'mother-unfriendly' working environments.

We understand the gender component of the Transformation Project to involve the principles of equity and representivity. Although often presented as uniquely South African, this project may have more in common with global trends than we think.

Does the Transformation Project's ambitious scope harm its gender component? Gender transformation has to fight for air among (at least): integration and rationalisation processes, including right-sizing and cost-effectiveness; the stabilisation of civil-military relations; reformulation of defence policy as a consultative process; and the reform of central offices, such as the Ministry of Defence. One sign of political weight is the setting of time-frames and the allocation of resources. This has not been the case with gender.

But even if the number of women does not increase, and the gender part of the Transformation Project withers away or stays as is, one can still conclude that it is now a matter of legitimacy that women should not be excluded from the SA military. Constitutions and laws express such legitimacy. But even if the laws were to become silent on the matter, the legitimacy of the idea that women are a part of the military will remain.

2. Implementation in the military

Seen more narrowly from a military angle, there are four sources of pressure about transformation: The White Paper on Defence; the Defence Review Process; what can be described as the Parliamentary Process (involving the Ministry of Defence, the Joint Standing Committee on Defence and the Portfolio Committee on Defence), and the Military Disciplinary Code.

The *White Paper on Defence* (South Africa, 1996) is a policy document for the DOD and SANDF with the aim of achieving the constitutional requirements outlined above. The more pertinent concerns of the White Paper are in Chapter 2, Section 2: 'The SANDF shall develop a non-racial, non-sexist and non-discriminatory institutional culture as required by the Constitution' (p. 14). And 'The composition of the SANDF shall broadly reflect the composition of South Africa. To this end, affirmative action and equal opportunity programmes will be introduced' (p. 15). Representativeness for the DOD refers 'to the racial, and gender composition of the SANDF and to the fair integration and equitable representation of the constituent integrating forces at all ranks'; failing that, the legitimacy of the SANDF would be undermined (p. 15). The Minister of Defence 'will oversee the design and implementation of an affirmative action and equal opportunity programme. To this end, the Minister will establish a joint work group on affirmative action and equal opportunity within the DOD' (pp. 28–29). This programme is then discussed in more detailed, especially the identification and elimination of discriminatory practices and attitudes. The Minister must 'report annually to Parliament on the progress made in implementing the programme' (p. 40).

The aim of the *Defence Review*, an advisory policy document, was to elaborate on 'comprehensive long-range planning' (Department of Defence, 1998, p. 1), including the 'the transformation of the culture of the DOD in relation to its

values, traditions, human resource practices and managerial practices'; repealing the restrictions on areas available for women to serve; increasing the number of women serving in higher positions; identifying potential and existing problems women encounter as serving members of the SANDF; and paying attention to the 'elimination of backlogs in the training of women especially for command positions in combat related musterings ...' (p. 47). The Review further notes some specific problems that are related to the retaining of women. These are: first, day-care for young children; second, disruptions to families if both parents are serving members who may be required to attend long training courses or be deployed away from home; and third, the problem of parents with full home care responsibilities.

The Defence Review was fully aware that it is not going to be enough to simply increase the number of women serving in the armed forces; the military would have to find ways of dealing with any 'unfair discriminatory practices or attitudes, past and present, involving women employed in the DOD'. One such policy is the implementation of a programme of civic education. Another is the creation of a Chief Directorate of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. The responsibilities of this institution are the management of the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action training, plus the task of monitoring discrimination, implementation of any related policies and the handling of cases of discrimination. Finally, there is a new work group on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, responsible for formulating policy in accordance with the White Paper on Defence.

In the *Parliamentary Process*, the ministers and parliamentarians have usually been keen public supporters of transformation and, while take pride in listing the SANDF's successes, are unable to avoid noting the glaring shortcomings of gender transformation. On the occasion of the Defence Budget Vote on 9 March 1999, for example, the then Minister of Defence, Mr J. Modise, remarked that the SANDF underwent perhaps the greatest transformation of any of the state institutions because of the need to integrate eight previously adversarial armed forces (Parliament of South Africa, 1999).⁶ Already in 1999 almost 20 per cent of the DOD's members were women, with 13 per cent in uniform and a quarter of these were officers. And the SANDF was one of the few armed forces in the world to accept the right of women to serve in combat (Parliament of South Africa, 1999). On the second reading debate of the Defence Bill in August 2002 in the National Assembly, to cite another example, Mr S.B. Ntuli (ANC) lauded the first two female generals (Major General Sedibe and Major General Van der Poel) (Parliament of South Africa, 2000).

The then Deputy Minister of Defence, Ms N. Madlala-Routledge, spoke at the Defence Budget Vote on 7 April 2000 and expressed similar sentiments but marked her speech, on this occasion and later, with attention to detail (Parliament of South Africa, 2000). Madlala-Routledge noted that the middle strata of the armed forces remained white and male, especially in the SAN and the SA Air Force (SAAF). Even if numbers were to improve, by fast-tracking (for example), the Deputy Minister conceded the real change would come with a change in values. This would include gender-sensitivity training. In October

2000 the Deputy Minister stated that she has been tasked by the Minister of Defence 'to meet with women soldiers in order to identify specific problems that they are experiencing, which may inhibit their development and promotion within the SANDF'. In order to further the gender equity programme of the SANDF, the Secretary for Defence and the Ministry of Defence had the ability to 'monitor policy implementation with regard to the promotion of non-racism and non-sexism in the SANDF' (Parliament of South Africa, 2000).

On the occasion of the Defence Budget vote, 7 April 2000, Mrs N.R. Shope (ANC) brought to the House's attention the importance of the emancipation of women and how the integration process can obstruct the emancipation process. Further, Mrs Shope highlighted that although the SANDF has held two gender conferences and that General Sedibe is in charge of the equal opportunity programmes, women's issues take a long time to be heard (Parliament of South Africa, 2000). By 2005 the Minister of Defence, Mr M.G.P. Lekota, returned to under-representation of women as 'lieutenants-general and majors-general in the top structure of the SANDF' as well as 'a very limited representation of women in the senior management of the DOD' (Parliament of South Africa, 2005). Gender representivity was something that must be achieved at all levels of the armed forces, not just in higher- and lower-, but also middle-ranks.

Again and again the parliamentary process has focused on: (a) the problems specific to the SAN and SAAF; (b) the persistence of problems in attitudes towards women present in the SANDF; and (c) resistance to the idea of women in combat roles, especially among senior officers. About combat roles, women soldiers themselves were divided. The parliamentarians are not imagining things: their information arrives via briefings and submissions from the Minister of Defence, the DOD, and the Directorate of Equal Opportunities.⁷ It is not as though the military has not tried: training modules have been introduced into all courses to ensure that all personnel are conscious of what constitutes discriminatory or offensive behaviour (Department of Defence, 1998).

And in the *Military Disciplinary Code*, sexual harassment, abuse of power, and victimisation, are regarded as offences and punishable under the Military Disciplinary Code (Molekane, 1996).

2.1. *Naval policy and implementation*

The three policy documents promulgated within the SAN concerning gender transformation are: Naval Order Pers No 3/2001 Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action; Naval Order Gen 2/2005 Social Responsibility in the SA Navy; and Naval Order Gen 1/2006 Gender Transformation in the SA Navy.

2.1.1 Equal opportunity and affirmative action

On 2 July 2001 the Personnel Order on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action was implemented. The aim of the document was 'to provide guidelines [with respect to] the broad parameters governing the implementation of Equal Opportunities and Affirmative Action' in the SAN (South African Navy, 2001, p. vi).

It details the principles and objectives of both Equal Opportunity (EO) and Affirmative Action (AA) with attention to different forms of discrimination that occur.

The Personnel Order begins by stressing that Affirmative Action was a means to an end, that of equality and equal opportunity, and was meant to correct imbalances in the demographic representation of the SAN and its leadership structures (pp. 1–2). The desired outcome was representivity or to be ‘broadly representative of the population it serves’ (p. 3). The process of affirmative action also required fairness and opportunity, including the elimination of unfair discrimination in the management of human resources; the continual identification and correction of unfair practices and policies; the acknowledgement of sexual harassment as a form of sex and gender discrimination that impacts negatively on mission readiness; and the acknowledgement of ‘the rights of women to serve in all ranks and positions, including combat roles’ (p. 6).

About Employment Equity for Women the Personnel Order made five provisions. First, due and equal consideration should be given to mission accomplishment and representivity. Second, during parades and drill exercises, it is preferred that women be grouped together. Third, all women are afforded the right to serve in combat. Fourth, the working environment must be made conducive to the successful training, development and employment of women, and facilities were to be changed so as to be ‘gender-appropriate with due regard to privacy and decency’. These provisions seem, at first glance, to suggest that the SAN took the route of a gender-friendly environment. Closer examination, however, reveals that the SAN prefers creation of a gender-neutral working environment through the elimination of ‘all derogatory sexual themes and conduct’ (p. 8).

With regards to Recruitment and Selection policies, the SAN commits itself to special measures to recruit previously under-represented groups to be employed in areas from which they were formerly excluded. This is complemented by a policy of ‘accelerated advancement and fast-tracking’, provided that the individual agrees to such an exercise (p. 14).

2.1.2 Gender transformation

The Naval Order on Gender Transformation institutionalises a framework for the development of policies, procedures, and practices to ensure women’s equal rights and opportunities for women (South African Navy, 2006, p. v). Two aspects of this Order are important: the stress on leadership in eliminating discrimination, and the need to build a new organisational culture. The naval order declares that ‘issues of discrimination are essentially issues of leadership’. Active leadership is required to spread the right values, attitudes and behaviours about gender equity. And leaders need to scrutinise any policy and practice which is a barrier to transformation (p. 5).

The SAN has taken the view that barriers are to be addressed through reward and punishment, training and promotion. One example of a barrier is the elite operational environments, those areas where performance traditionally has fast-tracked males to the top of the hierarchy, the diving and submarine schools. Here the SAN has only recently permitted women to apply for positions (p. 5).

If pregnant, many doors close. A pregnant sailor is posted to a shore establishment and the Director Fleet Human Resources limits overseas assignments as much as possible. For the entire period of her pregnancy, no member would remain staffed on any SAN ship or submarine.

2.1.3 Gender structures

Other than specific policies, the Naval Order on Gender Transformation also calls for the establishment of 'gender structures'. These include the SA Navy Gender Focus Group and SA Navy Gender Forums. The former is established under the chairpersonship of the Chief of the Navy, with the purpose of 'empowering women through the interrogation of barriers and the creation of conditions for organisational success, personal growth and participation' (p. 16). Thus, these structures are aimed at both retention and promotion of women. The representatives are appointed by the Chief of the Navy and drawn from organisational levels Two and Three.

The functions of the Gender Forums are various: they give advice on gender-related issues; identify and make recommendations on environmental and service conditions, and employment barriers to women; make submissions to the relevant higher authority; and monitor the implementation and progress of gender policies, projects, and programmes and assess their efficacy and suggest amendments if necessary (pp. 16–18).⁸

2.1.4 Social responsibility

With the Naval Order on Social Responsibility, the SAN identifies what it thinks is proper and improper social behaviour. The naval order declares what is prescribed accepted behaviour in terms of 'interaction between gender groups and rank groups, with special reference to fraternisation, sexual harassment, use of accommodation and ablution facilities, maintenance of a gender neutral environment, and the use of alcohol in the SA Navy' (South African Navy, 2006, p. v and 7–9). Most crucial are personal relationships between officers and NCOs.

The Naval Order outlines the SAN's commitment to a gender neutral environment, is very specific, and/or leaves very little discretion as to behaviour. We see what kind of computer screensavers are out of bounds, what kinds of dress is prohibited, as also certain kinds of language (p. 9):

... specific vigilance must be used in the training establishments, to eradicate the use of any foul or abusive language, whether between learners or between instructors and learners. This includes derogatory or dehumanising terminology such as referring to female learners by such terms as 'lyfie', 'dolls', ladies, and the like. Learners are to be addressed appropriately in terms of their rank and not in terms of their gender.

One of the intended potential medium-term impacts would be an increased number of women recruited and retained within the SAN. Therefore, as the numbers of women increase these policies would become more important and reach further into the operations of the SAN. Although difficult to research, the budgetary aspects of these policies are also of concern, i.e. is there enough funding available to implement all these policies effectively. The degree of

funding would also give an indication as to the commitment of the DOD and SAN personnel to gender transformation.

The long-term impacts would depend largely on the success of the policies in the short- and medium-term to recruit and retain women in the SAN. If the levels of female representation do not reach a point that is deemed appropriate by Parliament, it is likely the pressure will build for new and further-reaching policies.

Despite the constitutional and other legal allowances for women in combat, resistance to it persists. One reason, suggested by Lindy Heinecken (2002), is that both the old SA Defence Force and the non-statutory forces had little enthusiasm for women as soldiers. The homeland militaries and the SADF restricted women soldiers and/or gave them limited roles. In the non-statutory forces 'there were virtually no African women in the senior ranks' (Heinecken, 1999). Given that there is little tradition of gender policies in South African armed forces, it is hardly surprising that, in the military, only 40 per cent of officers support the idea of women being allowed to do combat duty on the frontline. The various arms of the military gave differing opinions on the matter—naval officers were 'markedly more supportive'. Naval vessels, however, are seen as 'masculine space' (Van Wijk, 2005, p. 255) as some military spaces are seen as intrinsically male.

The soldiers and sailors are not alone in their views, as Heinecken (1999) points out: public attitudes remain divided with only 46 per cent of the general population supporting the idea of women volunteering for combat duty.

The Transformation Project, partly because of its origins in political opposition to the state, sees little conflict between gender and racial transformation. Studies of such exercises elsewhere⁹ and local signs, however, suggest that on a practical level, and especially if they are to be simultaneously implemented, gender and racial transformation might well work at cross-purposes. Programmes to combat racism rely on reinforcing similarities and withdrawing from the self, whilst gender-sensitivity programmes emphasise differences and delving into the self.

How do militaries combat racism, racial prejudice, and the like? One typical measure is to draw a distinction between what soldiers think and what they do, and to punish external displays of racism, etc. But how to change what the soldier thinks? Many, if not the majority of militaries use some form of team-building, that is, expose a collection of soldiers to a common enemy that makes them suffer as individuals; make them realise that they need each other (despite what they thought before); and so on. The typical process is geared toward action, pushing thought to the background, drawing away from the self towards others; etc. The focus is on group dynamics.

How do militaries deal with gender insensitivity? Usually by means of gender-sensitivity training which involves many things, the bulk of which are aimed at heightening awareness. In one technique, for example, a person tells the story of their life with the intent to show gender forces at work and how roles were adopted and assigned without a second thought. Here the process is to delve into the self, into past biography and context, etc. with the hope that people will see the error of their own and society's ways. The focus is on the individual.

Although here presented simplistically, it is obvious that the two contradictory processes are oil and water and, as such, quite a complicated challenge for the Transformation Project. It is, and according to soldiers¹⁰ apparently has been quite disheartening to be part of a strenuous exercise in team-building, at the end of which apartheid seems to have been cleaned off the face of the earth, and to find it alive and well after the following Monday's session in gender-sensitivity.

3. Accomplishment: the South African Navy

How do we assess the gender transformation project in the SAN? The numbers of women currently serving, the numbers of women to be discharged since the integration of forces, and the current numbers by rank distribution, will be presented. The first set of figures will indicate the percentage of women, whilst the second set will provide an impression of the retention levels of the SAN. The last figure will demonstrate the effectiveness of retaining, training and promoting of female officers in the SAN. These figures will then be compared with similar figures for men and from similar data in 1999.

Our indicators are as follows: the first indicator is the number of women in the SAN. This is measured in both absolute and relative terms. Second, the distribution of women through the ranks is measured in absolute and relative terms. The strength of this method is that it will rely on empirical evidence and is based on a simple comparison between the numbers and distribution of men and women. An apparent weakness is that the number of women in the SAN, and their ranks and promotions is, of course, only one indicator of transformation.

The SANDF has been undergoing a rationalisation process; reducing the force numbers overall. This process will thus have an impact on the ability of the SAN to recruit and employ new personnel. Additionally, as the latest Defence Budget Vote illustrates, a significant proportion of the budget is ear-marked for the Strategic Defence Procurement Package (National Treasury, 2006). Such expenditure directly affects SAN personnel: the more money is spent on arms, the less money is available for personnel.

Data was obtained from the SANDF's human resource data-base during a meeting with a representative from Fleet Human Resources in Simon's Town. Two series sets of data are examined: the number of women serving as of 10 March 2006, and the number of women who have left the SAN from 28 April 1994 to 10 March 2006. The relevance of the statistics can only be judged in relation to other figures, therefore, the section will first present the current data and then proceed to compare the data and offer analysis of the statistics.

Table 1 shows the number and ranks of women currently serving in the SAN.

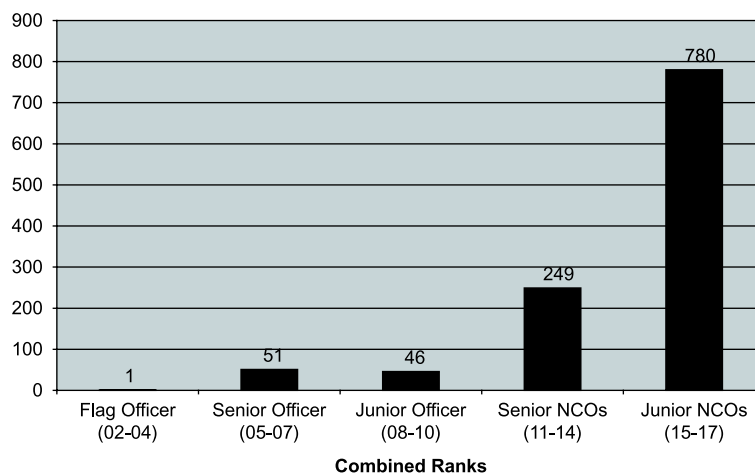
The ranks of the South African Navy can be grouped together as follows: first, Flag Officers are comprised of Vice Admirals, Rear Admirals and Rear Admirals (Junior Grade). Second, there are Senior Officers, Captains, Commanders and Lieutenant Commanders. Third, there are Junior Officers, Lieutenants, Sub-Lieutenants and Ensigns. Fourth, the split between Commissioned and

Table 1. Number of Women Currently Serving (March 2006)

Rank	MSDS	Permanent force	5 Year contract	2 Year contract	Total
02 Vice Admiral					
03 Rear Admiral					
04 Rear Admiral (Junior Grade)		1			1
05 Captain		8			8
06 Commander		21			21
07 Lieutenant Commander	1	13	8		22
08 Lieutenant			11		11
09 Sub-Lieutenant			16		16
10 Ensign	10		8	1	19
11 Warrant Officer Class 1		22			22
12 Warrant Officer Class 2		35			35
13 Chief Petty Officer	2	48	11		61
14 Petty Officer	9	16	103	3	131
15 Leading Seaman	86	1	118	50	255
16 Able Seaman	128		14	6	148
17 Seaman	377				377
Total	613	165	289	60	1127

Non-Commission Officers (NCOs) occurs with Senior NCOs, Warrant Officers Class 1 and 2, and Chief Petty and Petty Officers. Last, there are the Junior NCO ranks with Leading Seamen, Able Seamen and Seamen. Figure 1 combines similar rank groups and the different service types.

There is only one female Flag Officer, and 51 Senior Officers. The Junior Officer ranks (Lieutenant to Ensign) have 46 females. The NCO ranks have

**Figure 1.** Women Serving by Rank (March 2006).

much higher numbers, with 249 Senior NCOs (Warrant Officer 1 to Petty Officer) and a very high number of Junior NCOs (Leading Seaman to Seaman) at 780.

Table 2 shows the number of women who have left the service of the SAN from the formation of the SANDF on 28 April 1994 to 10 March 2006.

Figure 2 merges similar ranks and the service types.

Thus, there have not been any female Flag Officers leaving the service. The other officer ranks have similar levels of women discharged, with 22 and 21,

Table 2. Number of Women Discharged 28 April 1994–10 March 2006

Ranks	Skills development	Permanent force	5 Year contract	2 Year contract	Total
Captain		2			2
Commander		14			14
Lieutenant Commander		6			6
Lieutenant		10			10
Sub-Lieutenant			4		4
Ensign		1	6		7
Warrant Officer Class 1		11			11
Warrant Officer Class 2		15			15
Chief Petty Officer		37			37
Petty Officer		3	1		4
Leading Seaman		21	41	7	69
Able Seaman	21	4	16	39	80
Seaman	25	19	8	30	82
Midshipman			2		2
Total	46	143	78	76	343

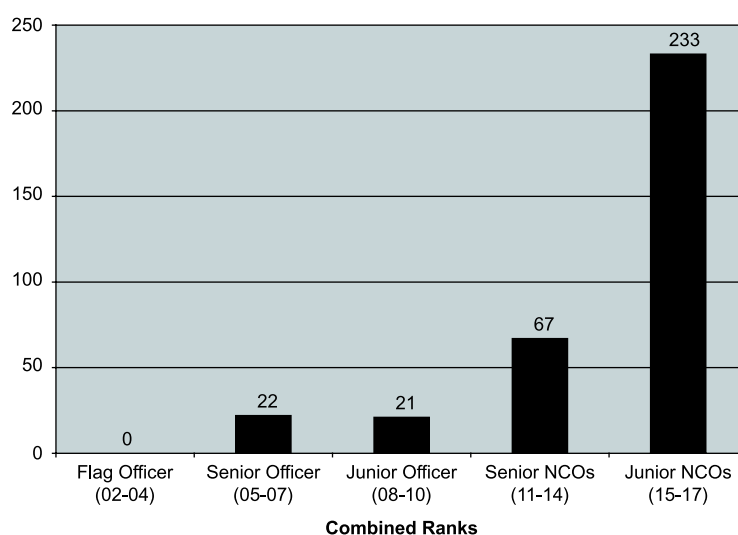


Figure 2. Rank Distribution of Women Discharged, 28 April 1994 to 10 March 2006.

respectively. The Senior NCOs have seen 67 women discharged, whilst the Junior NCOs have had far more women discharged, at 233.

As is shown, there are a fair number of women serving throughout the rank structures, with a large number of women leaving the junior ranks. The significance of the data will now be discussed in comparison to previous data for 1999 and to similar data for the number of men serving.

3.1 Comparisons

The comparison of data will be structured firstly with regards to the data for women serving in the SAN in March 1999. Subsequently, both the 2006 and the 1999 data will be compared with the relative number of men serving. This will open the way for an assessment of the SAN's transformation.

The data for this section was gathered from a SANDF Annual Report in 1999 (SANDF, 1999). The year is significant in that it is roughly mid-way into the SAN's transformation process. Furthermore, neither previous annual reports nor subsequent reports contain the same detailed information explicitly for the SAN. There is data for the SANDF as a whole, but not for the different arms of the military.

We compare the 1999- and 2006-levels in Figure 3.

The number of women serving in the SAN has increased sizeably throughout the ranks. The only exception to this has been the ranks of Junior Officers, which have not seen a significant increase. However, this is in keeping with the general trend in the SAN where senior officers outnumber junior officers, as will be shown when comparing rank distribution with men. The distribution of women as a percentage is illustrated in Figure 4.

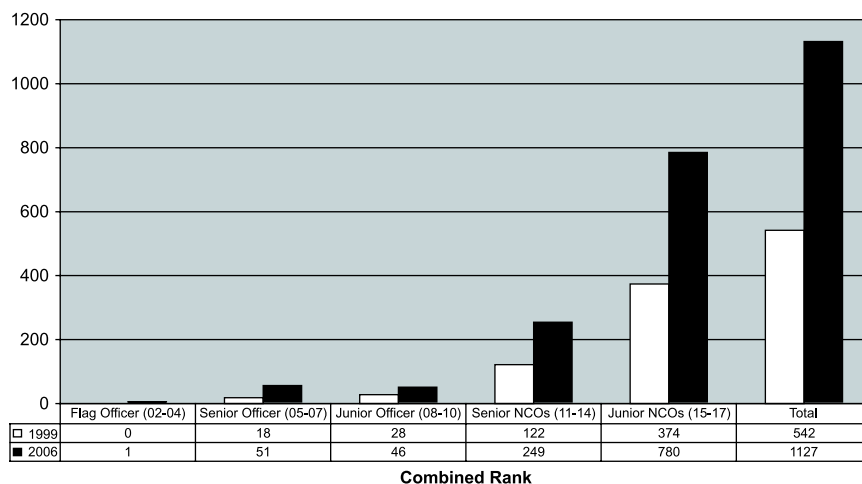


Figure 3. Women Serving 1999 and 2006.

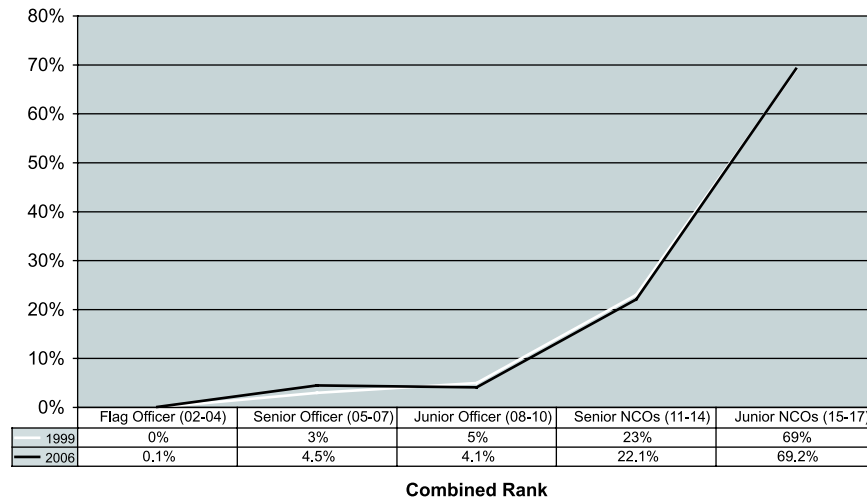


Figure 4. Rank Distribution for Women 1999 and 2006.

The above graph illustrates that the distribution of women throughout the ranks has not changed significantly between 1999 and 2006, with the vast majority of women being represented in the Junior NCO ranks. Additionally, there is the first representation of women in the Flag Officer ranks with the appointment of Rear Admiral (Junior Grade) Khanyisile Litchfield-Tshabalala, who was promoted in January 2004.

The above data needs to be compared with the relative number of men serving to generate an effective representation of women in the SAN.

Having already introduced data for the number of men serving in 1999, the same must now be done for the number of men in 2006. We see this in Table 3.

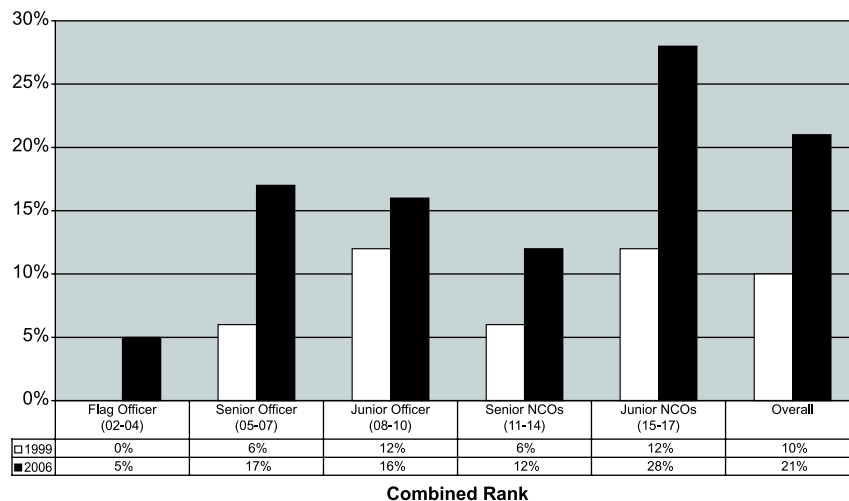
Table 3 illustrates the overall decrease in the number of men serving in the SAN between 1999 and 2006, by 570. The distribution of this loss has varied over the ranks with an increase in the number of Flag Officers, Junior Officers and Senior NCOs, while the number of Senior Officers and Junior NCOs has declined significantly. As mentioned above, the SAN has seen more Senior Officers than Junior, and this trend is continuing.

The Percentage of Force by Rank for women is also important, as it demonstrates the effective distribution of women in relation to men through the ranks. Figure 5 shows a comparison of this distribution between 1999 and 2006.

Flag Officers have seen the first female Rear Admiral (JG), thus giving women a 5 per cent representation at the most senior level. Senior Officers have seen a change from 6 per cent to 17 per cent and junior officers have increased from 12 to 16 per cent, a fairly minimal increase. The Senior NCOs have increased from 6 to 12 per cent and Junior NCOs have increased substantially from 12 to 28 per cent, just shy of one-third of junior ratings. Overall, female representation in the SAN has increased from a nominal 10 per cent in 1999 to a recognisable 21

Table 3. Men Serving 2006 (Combined Ranks)

Rank	2006	1999
Flag Officer (02-04)	18	12
Senior Officer (05-07)	248	261
Junior Officer (08-10)	238	201
Senior NCOs (11-14)	1864	1796
Junior NCOs (15-17)	1999	2667
Total of force	4367	4937

**Figure 5.** Women as Percentage of Total Force 1999 and 2006.

per cent in 2006. There has been a substantial increase in the number of women serving in the SAN both in numbers and in proportion to men.

However, when examining the number of discharges, a different picture emerges. Table 4 shows the number and distribution of men to be discharged from the SAN.

Table 5 combines male discharges by service types and rank-groups. Table 5 indicates that the majority of men leaving have been in the Junior NCO ratings, although large numbers can be seen throughout the rank structure. What, then, about the number of women to be discharged?

Figure 6 illustrates how, for the most part, the number of women to be discharged is in keeping with the numbers of men leaving. The officer corps sees a mere 1 or 2 per cent difference, whilst the Senior NCOs differ by 15 percentage points, and the Junior NCOs differ by 19 percentage points. The different service types have seen roughly the same number of women leaving at the Junior NCO level, whilst the Senior NCO levels are entirely Permanent Force

Table 4. Men Discharged Between 28 April 1994 and 10 March 2006

	Rank	Skills development	Permanent force	5 Year contract	2 Year contract	Total of force
2	Vice Admiral		5			5
3	Rear Admiral		3			3
4	Rear Admiral (JG)		18			18
5	Captain		58			58
6	Commander		116	1		117
7	Lieutenant Commander		81	4		85
8	Lieutenant		83	17		100
9	Sub-Lieutenant		76	56	1	133
10	Ensign		41	30		71
11	Warrant Officer Class 1		200			200
12	Warrant Officer Class 2		121			121
13	Chief Petty Officer		515	8		523
14	Petty Officer		356	89	2	447
15	Leading Seaman		341	466	63	870
16	Able Seaman	59	69	179	343	650
17	Seaman	73	25	23	174	295
	Total	132	2108	873	583	3696

Table 5. Men Discharged with Rank Distribution

Rank	Rank distribution (%)	
Flag Officer (02-04)	26	1
Senior Officer (05-07)	260	7
Junior Officer (08-10)	304	8
Senior NCOs (11-14)	1291	35
Junior NCOs (15-17)	1815	49
Total	3696	

leavers. This would indicate that the retention levels amongst the most junior levels need to be improved for women. However, since the reasons for being discharged may vary, it is difficult to draw conclusions. The high number of Permanent Force leavers would be indicative of the SANDF's rationalisation process, but this would not account for the high number of MSDS and Contract leavers. This certainly warrants further research into the particular reasons that women may have for leaving.

Throughout the Literature and the Policy documents, Race and Gender were often discussed as similar and/or related issues to be addressed in the transformation project. However, it is the contention of this paper that Gender Transformation is a very different process from that of Racial Transformation. As such, this section will compare the different levels of success between Race and Gender transformation in the SAN.

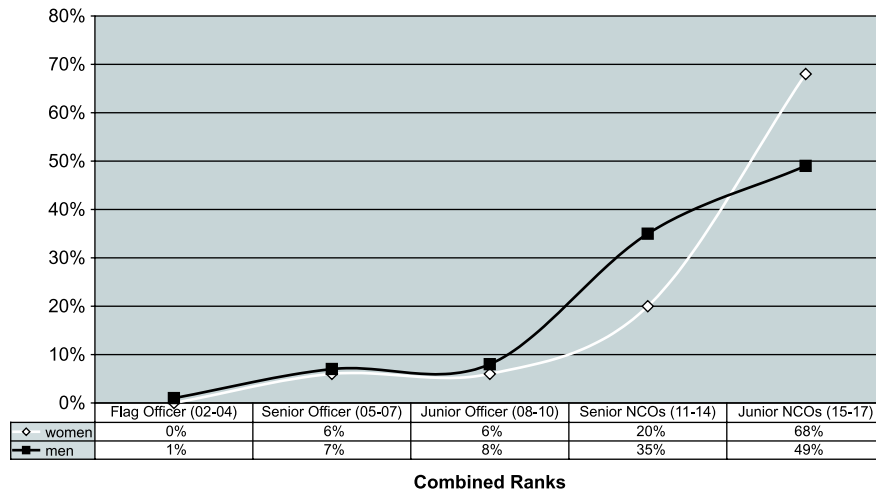


Figure 6. Discharge by Rank Distribution and Gender.

As it is the goal of the SAN and the other armed forces to be broadly representative of the demographics of the population, these figures must be introduced. In 1999 the racial breakdown of the population was: Africans 73 per cent, Coloureds 10 per cent, Asians 3 per cent and Whites 13 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 1999). The most current statistics available are for mid-year estimates for 2005, showing the distribution as: Africans 79 per cent, Coloureds 9 per cent, Asians 2 per cent and Whites 9 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 2005). Thus, for there to be a fair racial distribution in the SAN, the figures should match. For 1999, Table 6 represents the combined rank distribution by race:

Table 6 illustrates the racial distribution as being heavily weighted in favour of Whites in the Upper Ranks, with the only minority being in the Junior NCO ratings. Indeed, it is only in that rating that the racial distribution nears the actual demographics of the country. Table 7 shows the comparable situation in 2006.

Table 7 shows a slightly different situation, with a greater decrease in the representation of Whites across the board. The lower ranks better reflect the

Table 6. Service Numbers by Race 1999

Combined Ranks (race)	African (%)	Coloured (%)	Asian (%)	White (%)
Flag Officer (02-04)	17	0	0	83
Senior Officer (05-07)	4	3	2	90
Junior Officer (08-10)	17	6	3	73
Senior NCOs (11-14)	4	36	15	45
Junior NCOs (15-17)	34	32	10	23
Total of force	21	31	11	37

Table 7. Service Numbers by Race 2006

Combined Ranks (race)	African (%)	Coloured (%)	Asian (%)	White (%)
Flag Officer (02-04)	16	3	3	78
Senior Officer (05-07)	16	5	2	77
Junior Officer (08-10)	45	10	4	41
Senior NCOs (11-14)	16	35	13	35
Junior NCOs (15-17)	61	20	5	15
Total of force	40	24	8	28

demographics with 61, 20, 8 and 15 per cent, being fairly close to the respective levels of 79, 9, 2 and 9 per cent for Africans, Coloureds, Asians and Whites, respectively. The Junior NCO ratings, however, are still fairly unrepresentative. That being said, the racial transformation of the SAN is proceeding far better than the gender transformation (79–21 per cent). Moreover, there has been a substantial difference at the Junior Officer ranks, where as previously 73 per cent were White, the figure is now at 41 per cent, a 32 percentage-point change in seven years. This is perhaps the most dramatic change in the composition of the SAN over the past few years.

The earliest and most recent figures obtainable for a gender profile of the SANDF are from November 1996 and July 2005.

Table 8 shows that, while the SAN is the smallest service arm by personnel, the proportion of women to men is relatively high, with the obvious exception of the SAMHS. The SAMHS consists of over 50 per cent women. By excluding the SAMHS, the overall figure changes to 7 per cent female in 1996, and 15 per cent in 2005. By this formulation, the SAN is staying ahead of the general trend, with a 10 percentage point change over the time period. The figure has also risen to 21 per cent as for March 2006. But, most importantly, there is no doubt, that more women are being recruited, in absolute and relative terms, by the SANDF.

Table 8. Gender Percentage by Service Arm 1999 and 2005

	1996				2005			
	Male	%	Female	%	Male	%	Female	%
Army	61,304	94	3749	6	35,835	86	5667	14
Air Force	9826	88	1347	12	7741	84	1495	16
Navy	5254	92	440	8	4786	82	1072	18
SAMHS	3473	55	2892	45	2774	47	3094	53
Overall	79,857	90	8428	10	51,136	82	11,328	18

Source: Heineken (1997, p. 114) and Department of Defence (2005).

4. Assessment and conclusion

The Transformation Project requires fundamental change of the inhabitants of the state and changes in governance and behaviour. The gender component of the Transformation Project is an increase in the number of women serving, without hindrance to roles, as well as the inclusion or creation of effective structures and institutions and management of relevant issues that the full inclusion of women necessitates. What then can be concluded about the South African Navy's Gender Transformation project?

The Institutional Culture of the SAN has been transformed to a degree through the increased representation of women and the necessary changes in rules and regulations this necessitates. This is evident throughout the Transformation Project, from policy guidelines in the Defence Review, through to the specific procedures and prohibitive behaviour in the three pertinent Naval Orders. The specific issue of sexual harassment, as part of the institutional culture, has been addressed in a similar fashion. There is not much evidence as to how this change in institutional culture has impacted on women, but we can discern some effects based on issues raised by some senior women in the military and by Members of Parliament.

Three Naval Orders have been the instruments to increase numbers and to create a gender-neutral environment. By international standards, the current figure of 21 per cent women in the SAN is strikingly good. The overall number of women has risen considerably over the last few years, increasing by 100 per cent in six years. Moreover, when considering the decline in the number of men serving since 1999, the picture looks even better as the representation of women through the rank structure of the SAN has increased across the board, with nearly 30 per cent representation at the junior ratings. But these figures need to be interpreted with caution.

Like the other arms of the SANDF, the resources of the SAN are, in real terms, shrinking. One way of coping is that the military employs a high number of contract personnel on either five- or two-year contracts. In March 2006, 31 per cent of all the women currently serving in the SAN or 349 sailors were on contract, as was more than half that are still in the Military Skills programme, which leaves only 165 permanent force personnel.¹¹ What is the point of allowing women into the SAN, even multiplying their number, when, as temporary employees, they will not be given a chance to leave their mark on the organisation?

Notes

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1. Based, in large part, on the MA-thesis of Simon Taylor (2007), *Assessing the People's Navy: Gender Transformation and the South African Navy* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town). We are enormously indebted to the comments and suggestions of the examiners, Professor Andre du Pisani and Lindy Heinecken. We are also indebted to Professor Heinecken, the Department of Defence (DOD) and the SA Navy for data. We also thank members of Parliament who consented to be interviewed. Needless to say, errors are ours.

2. RSA (1996), The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (emphasis added).

3. Section 187, sub-section 1–3.

4. See also CGE (undated), 'About CGE', *Commission on Gender Equality*.

5. Although there have been numerous gender equality cases brought before the Constitutional Court, none of these (as yet) have dealt with the military.
6. The different armed forces have vastly differing gender policies. This sentiment is also expressed by the current chairperson of the JSCD, Ms T. Tobias.
7. See PMG, 'Setai Commission Final Report: Progress Report on Integration since June 2001' and PMG, 'Equal Opportunities in the SANDF briefing', 16 October 2001, Portfolio Committee on Defence.
8. See also the conference led by Rear Admiral (Junior Grade) Litchfield-Tshabalala in October 2005. Media Liaison Office, Naval Base Simon's Town, 'First Female Navy Admiral Leads A Women's Conference'.
9. See Charles C. Moskos and John S. Butler (1996), *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*; George E. Curry and Cornel West (1996), *The Affirmative Action Debate*; and Donna Winslow (1999), 'Rites of Passage and Group Bonding in the Canadian Airborne', *Armed Forces and Society*.
10. Detected by Annette Seegers during various activities of the civic education projects of the Minister of Defence, 1994–2000.
11. For men in the SAN, the figure is almost an equal split between contract, permanent and MSDS. Therefore, women in the SAN are being employed in a somewhat different pattern to men.

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